

Summarised inspection findings

Aberdeen School for the Deaf

Aberdeen City Council

SEED No: 5245044

30 January 2018

1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement

satisfactory

This indicator defines rigorous self-evaluation as a responsibility of all stakeholders. It highlights the importance of partnership approaches to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It emphasizes the need for strong leadership and robust analysis of a range of intelligence and data as essential features of effective continuous self-improvement. A key factor in this indicator is demonstrating the impact of self-evaluation in relation to outcomes for all learners. Their active participation in self-evaluation is therefore essential. The themes are:

- Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation
- Analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data
- Ensuring impact on learners' successes and achievements

- The headteacher has a clear understanding of the development needs of the school. Together with the deputy headteacher, she works effectively to evaluate the school's progress in meeting the school improvement priorities and, using school self-evaluation data, identify areas for development. The school improvement plan links to the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and has improvement priorities in place aimed at closing the attainment gap.
- All staff show a commitment to improving outcomes for children. They feel listened to, valued and respected. They work well as a team to share practice and give peer support. They come together to reflect on aspects of their work and to identify priorities for the future. Staff, including pupil support assistants (PSAs), are beginning to become more involved in self-evaluation approaches that identify school improvement priorities. They have begun to link self-evaluation to the quality indicators from How good is our school? (4th edition).
- Teachers are undertaking postgraduate qualifications and British Sign Language (BSL) training to continually develop their understanding about hearing impairment and to help improve outcomes for deaf children. This is resulting in more personalised approaches to meeting children's learning needs. Staff video teaching and learning episodes and analyse these to help improve learning experiences. These self-evaluation activities now need to be more closely aligned to school improvement and pupil equity funding (PEF) priorities.
- Staff and parents have been involved in identifying priorities for improvement including the pupil equity funding plans. Information from parents is influencing how funding should be used. The senior leadership team should measure the impact of PEF initiatives to ensure they are raising attainment for children.
- The school's own surveys identify that almost all children enjoy and feel included in school life. They understand what they are achieving in their learning. The school plans to increase opportunities for children to have their say by developing a pupil council. Children have leadership roles through peer support opportunities, Together Time and organising senior citizen deaf afternoons. There is now a need to track these experiences to better determine the skills children are developing and to identify other activities that they should be involved in.
- Through children's planning meetings, most parents understand their children's learning targets and how the school meet their child's needs. Family learning sessions in British Sign Language, mathematics and literacy help parents to better support learning at home.

The school improvement priorities and standards and quality report is shared with parents in summary in the school newsletter. Parents recently contributed improvement ideas for the pupil equity fund. The school now plans to establish parent self-evaluation focus groups.

- The school works with a range of partners, such as the educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, audiologist and health visitor to identify improvements in children's progress and there is now a need to develop these partnerships to inform school self-evaluation.
- The school gathers a wide range of data including standardised assessment information. Teachers use this information along with their professional judgement to identify the progress children are making in their learning. They are beginning to use benchmarking information and moderation of pieces of children's writing to develop a shared understanding of attainment of Curriculum for Excellence levels. Teachers regularly engage in moderation with the St Machar Associate Schools Group to extend their understanding of assessment.
- Progress tracking meetings to monitor and evaluate performance impact positively on raising attainment. There is now a need, through professional dialogue, to raise aspirations further. Formal lesson observations, supplemented by informal visits to classrooms by the leadership team, provides teachers with timely feedback to improve learning. The school does not yet collate and analyse this data to inform school improvement.
- An improvement calendar to support quality assurance is in place. It includes tracking pupil progress, learning and teaching observations, monitoring individualised education plans (IEPs) and reports to parents. Improvements in some areas of learning have been identified as a result of self-evaluation activities, for example the use of visual phonics is improving literacy skills. The leadership team should ensure that quality assurance data is collated systematically to inform school improvement.
- Teachers track children's individual achievement towards IEP targets. This helps them to identify additional interventions to improve further outcomes for children. The school now needs to track children's individual attainment and achievement across both mainstream and special provisions to better identify what personalised support is required to reduce any gaps in children's learning.
- The nursery has embedded self-evaluation principles well. Practitioners are reflecting on their practice daily to ensure that they are providing a high quality service to the children and their families. Self-evaluation is carried out with parents using a range of methods. Practitioners are keen to try out different approaches to engage parents more in the self-evaluation of the setting. As discussed, as well as carrying out self-evaluation more collaboratively with parents, staff should also encourage visiting professionals to contribute to the self-evaluation process.
- Practitioners are at the early stages of using the national self-evaluation framework; "How good is our early learning and childcare?" to support and drive improvement. As planned, they should continue to use this framework more fully. They have used Building the Ambition as an audit tool using the examples in the document to reflect on practice. Self-evaluation practices have led to improvement in the nursery and better outcomes for children. For example, the use of floor books has led to children being more consulted about their learning.

2.1: Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- Attainment in literacy and numeracy
- Attainment over time
- Overall quality of learners' achievement
- Equity for all learners.

- Overall, children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. The school has a range of assessment data in place that shows progress in areas of reading, spelling and comprehension. Teachers are using information to plan learning and to provide appropriate interventions and support. For example, results from standardised reading and numeracy assessments are used to plan learning and interventions. Staff have recently revised how they plan learning to take account of literacy and numeracy experiences and outcomes. They should continue to review how they are planning learning with a clear focus on ensuring that children are making as much progress as possible. Almost all children are achieving targets set within IEPs.
- Children within the additional support needs class are making progress in their learning and engagement. They are developing skills in British Sign Language (BSL) and using these skills to communicate well with others. Children are making good progress in following classroom routines and are beginning to follow instructions and complete learning activities.
- Children are developing an understanding about their deafness through a range of approaches. They are developing skills in independence by managing their own hearing aids and equipment. They are learning about deaf culture through a specific tailored programme and this is helping them build confidence and overcome barriers to learning they may encounter.

Attainment in Literacy and English

- Most children are attaining at expected CfE levels in literacy. There is scope to improve attainment for a few children. All children face barriers to learning due to their hearing loss and this can result in a slower pace of progress. However, staff recognise the need for specific interventions to help children overcome these barriers in order that they achieve their targets.
- Overall, children's attainment in listening and talking is good. In mainstream classes, children listen well to teachers and pay close attention to support staff who are providing BSL support. They interact well with other children. In classes within Aberdeen School for the Deaf, children engage very well with staff and with other children, displaying good listening/watching and talking/signing. Staff make good use of partners such as speech and language services to help children with listening and talking. This is having a positive impact on children's oral skills.
- Children's attainment in reading is satisfactory. Almost all children are able to read/sign text and stories from books. A few children are able to identify the role of the author and

describe the difference between fiction and non-fiction. When prompted, almost all children can identify different authors and the books they have written. Children would benefit from further opportunities to develop skills in reading and exposure to a range of different texts and authors.

- Overall, children's attainment in writing is good. Most children are able to present work well using correct punctuation and grammar. Children at the infant stages are writing common words and letters. Children at the senior stages are able to use connectives and descriptive vocabulary in their writing. Children are able to write for a variety of purposes such as stories, recipes and reports.

Attainment in Numeracy and Maths

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. The majority of children access maths and numeracy learning within the mainstream school and staff in Aberdeen School for the Deaf now need to track and monitor this learning and progress to ensure children are attaining as highly as possible.
- Children are able to apply number processes and use their knowledge to work out calculations. Children at the middle stages are able to add using numbers up to 20 and measure in centimetres. They are able to match analogue to digital times and they are successfully adding, subtracting and multiplying numbers up to 100. Children at senior stages are able to divide numbers up to 1000. They can identify the properties of 3D objects.
- Children have good opportunities to develop their confidence within mainstream classes in Sunnybank Primary School. They participate well in class activities, assemblies and use their BSL skills in whole school events such as the Christmas Concert. Children have worked alongside their mainstream peers to achieve a Rights Respecting School Award. Children also benefit from working with senior citizens in the community and this helps them develop social skills. The headteacher and staff have recognised the need to expand opportunities for children to develop skills outwith the classroom. A proportion of Pupil Equity Funding will be used to allow children to access clubs within the mainstream school. Staff should also continue with their plans to empower children to have an increased voice within Aberdeen School for the Deaf and within Sunnybank Primary.
- Inclusion for children is a key strength of the school. Children meet the challenges of mainstream classes and social activities very well and this is helping them prepare for mainstream secondary school. Almost all children transition successfully to their mainstream secondary school. The headteacher and staff are committed to ensuring deaf children have equal opportunities to achieve success and attain as highly as possible. They should continue with their plans to enable children to access clubs within the mainstream school and track the progress they are making in subject areas with a clear aim of further improving attainment and achievement for deaf pupils.

Nursery

- In literacy children are making good progress from their initial levels at the start of their time in nursery. This is evidenced in the progress they make in the targets outlined in their individual educational programmes. Almost all children demonstrate a good level of listening / watching skills during free play and group time. They are confident communicators and are happy to communicate with their peers, practitioners and visitors. Practitioners in both nurseries use signing well to complement their speech. Emergent

writing and mark making skills are developing well through a variety of appropriate experiences. Children's phonological awareness is progressing as a result of individual personalised support.

- In early mathematics children are making satisfactory progress. The nursery in the Aberdeen School for the Deaf focusses on mathematical language throughout their play and routines. The mainstream nursery takes the lead on tracking the progression of early mathematics. Almost all children are counting and recognising numbers to five. A few can count to 10. Almost all children recognise simple 2D shapes such as circles and squares. Children are deepening their understanding of the days of the week through stories and by discussing events that were taking place during the week. Practitioners recognise and celebrate children's achievements both within and outwith both nurseries. These achievements are documented in the children's little books and the interactive learning diaries in the mainstream nursery.
- The deaf children attend both nurseries. There are different responsibilities for the children's learning and progression in each nursery. For example, the mainstream nursery leads on numeracy development. However, the nurseries now need to be building a closer collaboration to ensure that both establishments know where the children are in their learning and how they can ensure that they make the best possible progress.

2.4 Personalise Support: theme 2 Targeted Support

- Staff have taken steps to document the needs of children and young people in the school and nursery. Needs are assessed well and linked to Individualised Educational Programmes which support planning and recording of progress. Staff and practitioners should consider how to further improve planning and recording of targeted support for individual children with specific care needs. This will make sure that progress and impact is more clearly documented and will ensure that next steps are carefully planned.
- Children and young people benefit from the supportive environment within Aberdeen School for the Deaf. Staff and practitioners are sensitive and responsive to the needs of children and young people. Deaf children receive additional support in the form of the deaf studies curriculum which supports their wider developmental needs. Children are well supported on an individual basis with programmes such as Talking Mats and through play therapy.
- The school and nursery provide effective opportunities for parents to network and offers an informal monthly coffee morning. Parents and carers benefit from the provision of British Sign Language classes which improves communication at home. The school and nursery are beginning to formally consult parents and carers of deaf children in decision making. The school has involved parents and carers in discussion to identify priorities for the Pupil Equity Fund. The school and nursery should now consider how to further involve parents and carers in decision making in a formal manner.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion: theme 1 Wellbeing

- There are strong caring relationships in the school and the nursery. As a result, there is a warm, respectful and positive atmosphere. All staff and practitioners recognise the central importance of relationships in supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing. Staff in the school use a structured programme well when helping children to recognise their emotions and feelings. This programme is carried out in consultation with outside partners. Staff and practitioners are attuned to the various needs of children and their families and are committed to improving their outcomes.
- The principles of Getting it right for every child are embedded throughout practice. The nursery is at an early stage of using the language of the wellbeing indicators. Both the nursery and the school encourage children to complete their wellbeing chart which gives children a practical understanding of what is meant by each of the wellbeing indicators. Children, using a PowerPoint presentation, contribute to the review of their plans. This further enhances their knowledge of the wellbeing indicators. Children also contribute to the Rights Respecting School Award in the mainstream school. The school now needs to identify meaningful ways to support parents to develop a clearer understanding of the wellbeing indicators.
- In the nursery, practitioners value the views and opinions of children. Using pictorial representation, floor books and mind maps they encourage children to express their choices and opinions. Practitioners recognise that they need to expand the ways that children are involved in both leading their learning and taking on leadership roles such as snack helpers. As identified in the improvement plan, there is now a need to strengthen the pupil's voice in the school.

Strengths of the school

- Children are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. They display good levels of engagement in classes within both Aberdeen School for the Deaf and Sunnybank Primary School.
- Children have good opportunities to learn and be included with their mainstream peers in Sunnybank Primary School. Children and staff in Sunnybank Primary School are benefitting from learning British Sign Language from Aberdeen School for the Deaf pupils and staff.
- Staff work well together as a team. They are committed to improving their skills and developing their professional learning to help improve outcomes for children.

Areas for improvement for the school

- Staff should continue to improve attainment for all children in literacy and numeracy.
- Staff should develop approaches to track children's progress when they are learning in Sunnybank Primary School.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91% – 99%
Most	75% – 90%
Majority	50% – 74%
Minority/Less than half	15 – 49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

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